



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

By email: [planpolicy@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:planpolicy@tameside.gov.uk)

Your Ref

Our Ref CRTR-POL-2025-44054

Thursday 8 May 2025

## Homes Spaces Places Options and Preferences Plan Consultation - 14th April to 2nd June 2025

Thank you for your consultation on the above document.

The Canal & River Trust are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process, and as such we welcome the opportunity to input into planning policy related matters to ensure that our waterways are protected, safeguarded and enhanced within an appropriate policy framework.

The Trust believe that access to our waterways can provide multiple economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities. The Trust's Outcomes Report (2022) <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/valuing-our-waterways> highlights that the annual social value generated by our waterways is £4.6bn, including £1.1bn cost savings to the NHS derived from active use of the waterways and towpaths, and £2.9bn from improved mental health and wellbeing through access to our spaces for leisure and recreation. The annual economic value from water-based tourism expenditure generates over £1.5bn work of Gross Added Value from the visitor economy and marine sector.

The Trust broadly encourages policies which seek to:

- Protect the heritage, environmental and recreational value of canals, rivers and other waterscapes and to safeguard them against inappropriate development;
- support the ability of waterways to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities and the nation as a whole; and
- secure the long-term sustainability of the inland waterway network, their corridors and adjoining communities.

The Trust own and manage the Ashton Canal, Peak Forest Canal and Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which all run through the district. A proportion of our canals are subject to ecological designations, including the presence of SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) designations.

Please find below the Trust's response to your emerging policy document. We hope that the comments provided are clear and helpful. We are willing to continue to work with you, to meet and discuss these points for clarity and to seek to work together towards a high-quality borough that relates positively with the waterway network.

### Canal & River Trust Spatial Planning Team

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We wish to make comment on the following parts of the emerging Local Plan:

### **Policy Approach HSP S1: Overall Spatial Strategy**

Part 2 (e) of this policy approach includes aims to improve transport connections and accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking.

Our towpath network provides access to green and blue spaces for recreation and leisure, and also provides value as a vehicular-free route for cyclists and pedestrians between residential, commercial and business areas within the borough. We therefore consider it important for new developments to incorporate improved access to our network. **Opportunities may exist to specifically refer to connections to existing segregated walking and cycling routes, which would include our network, which could make the plan more effective in promoting sustainable transport and better access to the wider green (and blue) strategic infrastructure network.**

### **Policy Approach PE4: Strategic Recreation and Countryside Access**

In expansion to our comments on Policy Approach HSP S1 (part 2(e)) above, we identify that our towpath network provides access to green and blue spaces for recreation and leisure as well as for sustainable transport purposes. Access to our spaces can provide significant wellbeing benefits to local communities, and we therefore believe that our network should be referred to in the adopted plan in order to increase its effectiveness in improving access for communities to the open countryside. Recognition of the canal within paragraph 10.39 could help to ensure that the final plan does include appropriate reference.

Paragraph 10.40 refers to a need for proposals to consider potential impacts on areas, and to provide for appropriate mitigation. We consider this important to ensure that our network can robustly accommodate users in the future. We request that to achieve this, the Local Plan should address:

- A need to ensure that new developments resulting in additional use of our network take into account infrastructure improvements that may be required to ensure that towpaths (and other routes) can accommodate additional use. The Trust maintain our towpath network to a 'steady state' based on existing use. Additional use of our towpaths brought by new development may require improvements to the surface so as to minimise risks of erosion and to secure the long term viability of the route.
- A need to ensure that developments promote surveillance and have a positive visual relationship with our spaces. The visual enclosure of canalside areas with tall fences, for example, could diminish the character of our spaces and reduce surveillance, which can make our network less attractive or safe for people to access and utilise. Policy text to ensure this issue is addressed would help make the final plan more effective in ensuring that the long term use of existing footpaths (including towpaths) is appropriately safeguarded.

### **Policy approach HSP PL16: Design and Enhancement of the Waterside**

Tameside consists of existing linear waterway routes and well managed approaches to waterside spaces could help improve access to these spaces, support biodiversity, and aid local placemaking within the Borough. An approach to incorporate specific policy on waterside spaces could help make the Local Plan more effective in ensuring that Tameside can maximise the benefits of the presence of waterside spaces within the Borough.

As detailed in our response to the Homes, Spaces, Places Scoping Consultation, waterway and waterside space are unique environments, where we believe specific policy is required to protect and enhance the functions of the waterway for sustainable transport, waterborne transport, biodiversity. Due to their age and association with the historic development and industrialisation of Tameside, there is potential for our canals to be considered as non-designated heritage assets.

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In order to maximise the benefits of the proximity of development in proximity to waterside spaces, emerging policy should ensure that new development promotes surveillance of these areas, and promotes new pedestrian links and connections to these spaces. This would help to make the Local Plan more effective in promoting sustainable development that responds to these spaces positively, and maximises the benefits that can be brought about by the presence of our network within Tameside.

**We recognise that the draft text within Policy Approach HSP PL16 addresses the above points, and we believe this should be taken forward into any finalised wording as the Local Plan is developed further.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

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Area Planner



<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design>

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